

DEPARTMENT OF  
**PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Labor Training Program Benefits Inmates, Construction Industry**

(Jackson, LA) Through an innovative and groundbreaking partnership between Dixon Correctional Institute (DCI) and the South Central Laborers Apprenticeship Fund, 16 DCI inmates recently embarked on a life-changing training program. Gulf Coast Training Initiative is preparing this inaugural class of soon-to-be released offenders with construction skills that will certify them in OSHA 10, first aid/CPR, basic general construction and concrete finishing, as well as hazardous waste, asbestos abatement and mold remediation.

At a time when Louisiana is experiencing a shortage of approximately 95,000 people in its construction workforce, this unique marriage of labor and laborers could not come at a more opportune time.

James M. LeBlanc, DCI Warden, believes strongly in providing training and programs to assist incarcerated men and women in successfully transitioning back into society.

"An offender's family and community suffer when he/she reoffends," explains LeBlanc. "Having marketable job skills such as the ones provided by this program enhances the probability that they will become contributing members of society once again."

The seven-week training is funded by the apprenticeship program. Additional financial resources come from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

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LeBlanc would like to see this inaugural class be the first of many to come.

“DCI will serve as the pilot facility for this program. However, it is my belief that replicating this project in other facilities is warranted to provide much needed skilled workers as Louisiana continues to rebuild and to give offenders the necessary resources to break the cycle of returning to prison,” says LeBlanc.

The partnership with South Louisiana Laborers Apprenticeship Fund builds upon the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections’ CORe (Corrections Organized for Reentry) concept of preparing inmates for a successful return to their communities by giving them the tools they need to succeed once released. Michael Ellerbe, Director of Pre-Release at DCI and Tim Johnson, recruiter for South Central Laborers Apprenticeship Fund, put the wheels in motion for this venture. The primary focus of the Pre-Release Program is to provide life skills education, including job readiness, to inmates who are within one year of release.

All of the courses being taught at DCI are also available to the general public at a training site in Livonia, Louisiana. Those interested can call Tim Johnson at 601-688-0058 or the training site at 225-637-2311 for more details.

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